

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 086378

FOLLOWING REPEAT LAHORE SENT ACTION ISLAMABAD, SECSTATE
INFO KARACHI 15 APR 77.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L LAHORE 0381

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: ROLE OF ARMY IN PRESENT SITUATION

1. WITH A VIEW TO GAINING SOME INSIGHT INTO ARMY ATTITUDES
IN CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS, CONGEN HAD CONVERSATION MORNING
OF APRIL 15 WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL (RETIRED) MOHAMMAD AZAM
KHAN, FORMER GOVERNOR OF EAST PAKISTAN.

2. AZAM KHAN ASSERTED THAT BHUTTO IS THOROUGHLY HATED IN
PAKISTAN; THAT THERE IS NO PRACTICAL AREA FOR NEGOTIATION
OF POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIM AND THE OPPOSITION;
AND THAT HE IS FINISHED AS A LEADER. THEY ARMY WILL NOT
SUPPORT HIS BID FOR RETAINING POWER AND NEITHER WILL IT SHOOT
PAKISTANIS. WHEN ASKED WHAT ARMY'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE IF,
AS APPEARS LIKELY, THERE WERE WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE LATER IN
DAY WITH POSSIBLE CLASHES BETWEEN PPP AND PNA WORKERS, AZAM
KHAN REITERATED THAT ARMY WOULD NOT SHOOT AND ADDED THAT IT
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WAS HIGH TIME THE PUNJABIS MADE SOME SACRIFICE FOR THE SAKE
OF THE COUNTRY. "IF WE DON'T DO IT NOW HE WILL RULE US WITH
AN IRON FIST" TAPE GENERAL DECLARED.

3. AZAM KHAN WENT ON TO SAY THAT PRIME MINISTER'S FOLLOWING
AND PARTY SUPPORT WAS FAST VANISHING AND THAT HE HAD SPENT
THE LAST FIVE NIGHTS AT THE ARTILLERY MESS IN LAHORE

CANTOMENT. THIS PROVIDED HIM WITH A DEGREE OF SECURITY
HE DID NOT ENJOY ELSEWHERE IN LAHORE.

4. WHEN QUESTION OF ARMY'S POSSIBLE ROLE WAS AGAIN RAISED,
AZAM KHAN SAID ARMY WAS INTERESTED ONLY IN KEEPING BHUTTO
AFLOAT LONG ENOUGH FOR DETAILS OF HIS SECESSION TO BE WORKED
OUT AMONG POLITICAL GROUPS INVOLVED. ONCE THAT IS ACHIEVED
ARMY WOULD NO LONGER CONSIDER HIM THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

5. WHILE AZAM KHAN'S POLITICAL INSIGHT IS NOT ALWAYS KEEN,
HE DOES RETAIN GOOD CONNECTIONS WITH THE MILITARY. WE ARE
INCLINED TO GIVE CREDENCE TO HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE ARMY'S
ROLE AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE.

GAMON

UNQUOTE VANCE

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